

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Quintin M. Littlejohn,)	C/A No. 6:07-3157-RBH-WMC
)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
vs.)	Report and Recommendation
)	
Bill Blanton, Sheriff of Cherokee County;)	
Cherokee County Detention Center; and)	
NFN Burgess, Officer,)	
)	
Defendants.)	
)	

Background of this Case

The plaintiff is a pre-trial detainee at the Cherokee County Detention Center in Gaffney, South Carolina. Bill Blanton, the “lead” defendant, is the Sheriff of Cherokee County. Officer Burgess is, apparently, an officer at the Cherokee County Detention Center.¹ The plaintiff has also named the Cherokee County Detention Center as a defendant.

The “STATEMENT OF CLAIM” portion of the § 1983 complaint reveals that this civil rights action concerns, *inter alia*, alleged racial disparities relating to employment at the Cherokee County Detention Center. The plaintiff alleges: (1) there are sixteen white officers and three black officers at the Cherokee County Detention Center; (2) the defendants have not answered the plaintiff’s grievances; (3) the defendants on the “police force” have fifteen

¹It appears that the Cherokee County Sheriff’s Department operates the Cherokee County Detention Center.

white officers and three black officers; (4) the defendants are targeting black people because eighty percent of the inmates at the Cherokee County Detention Center are black; (5) "the K.K.K. is afoot" and a "Klan watch" is needed; (6) even in the Detective Force and C.S.I. unit, the ratio of whites to blacks is ten to one; (7) the "Full Constitution of the United States is in violation[;]" (8) the defendants do not have qualified immunity; and (9) the plaintiff has been falsely imprisoned. In his prayer for relief, the plaintiff seeks a declaratory judgment, \$2,500,000 in nominal damages, \$10,000,000 in compensatory damages, \$50,000,000 in "Pain and Suffering" damages, and \$250,000,000 in punitive damages.

The plaintiff is under an order of pre-filing review. See *Graham v. Riddle*, 554 F.2d 133, 134-135 & n. * (4th Cir. 1977).² The plaintiff was confined in the South Carolina Department of Corrections until May of 2003, when he "maxed out" his sentence for his 1982 conviction for armed robbery entered in the Court of General Sessions for Cherokee County. Prior to his current incarceration, the plaintiff resided in Gaffney, South Carolina.³

²The order of pre-filing review was entered on July 10, 1998, by the Honorable G. Ross Anderson, Jr., United States District Judge, in *Quintin Littlejohn v. William J. Clinton*, President of the United States, Civil Action No. 6:98-1169-13AK. Judge Anderson's order authorizes the Clerk's Office to assign civil action numbers to the plaintiff's pleadings for docket control purposes.

³See pleadings in *Quintin Littlejohn v. David Edwards Toyota; Mark Edwards; and All Agents in Active Concert*, Civil Action No. 7:06-1012-RBH-WMC. This court may take judicial notice of Civil Action No. 7:06-1012-RBH-WMC. *Aloe Creme Laboratories, Inc. v. Francine Co.*, 425 F.2d 1295, 1296 (5th Cir. 1970). See also *Colonial Penn Ins. Co. v. Coil*, 887 F.2d 1236, 1239 (4th Cir. 1989)(“We note that ‘the most frequent use of judicial notice is in noticing the content of court records.’”); *Mann v. Peoples First National Bank & Trust Co.*, 209 F.2d 570, 572 (4th Cir. 1954)(approving district court’s taking judicial notice of prior suit with same parties: “We think that the judge below was correct in holding that he could take judicial notice of the proceedings had before him in the prior suit to which Mann and the Distilling Company as well as the bank were parties.”); and *United States v. Parker*, 956 F.2d 169, 171 (8th Cir. 1992).

Discussion

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review⁴ has been made of the *pro se* complaint (Entry No. 1) pursuant to the procedural provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915, 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, and the Prison Litigation Reform Act. The review has been conducted in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-325 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Maryland House of Correction*, 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995)(*en banc*), cert. denied, 516 U.S. 1177 (1996); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983); *Boyce v. Alizaduh*, 595 F.2d 948 (4th Cir. 1979)(recognizing the district court's authority to conduct an initial screening of any *pro se* filing);⁵ *Loe v. Armistead*, 582 F.2d 1291 (4th Cir. 1978), cert. denied, *Moffitt v. Loe*, 446 U.S. 928 (1980); and *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir.), cert. denied, *Leeke v. Gordon*, 439 U.S. 970 (1978). The plaintiff is a *pro se* litigant, and thus his pleadings are accorded liberal construction. See *Erickson v. Pardus*, ____ U.S. ___, 75 U.S.L.W. 3643, 167 L.Ed.2d 1081, 127 S.Ct. 2197 (2007)(per curiam); *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 9-10 & n. 7 (1980)(per curiam); and *Cruz v. Beto*, 405 U.S. 319 (1972). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* complaint or petition, the plaintiff's or petitioner's allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of New York*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2nd Cir. 1975). Even under this less stringent standard, the complaint is

⁴Pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Civil Rule 73.02 (DSC), the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the District Court.

⁵*Boyce* has been held by some authorities to have been abrogated in part, on other grounds, by *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319 (1989)(insofar as *Neitzke* establishes that a complaint that fails to state a claim, under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), does not by definition merit *sua sponte* dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) [formerly 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d)], as "frivolous").

subject to summary dismissal. The requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Department of Social Services*, 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990).

The Cherokee County Detention Center is a group of buildings or a facility. Inanimate objects – such as buildings, facilities, and grounds – do not act under color of state law. Hence, the Cherokee County Detention Center is not a "person" subject to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. See *Allison v. California Adult Authority*, 419 F.2d 822, 823 (9th Cir. 1969)(California Adult Authority and San Quentin Prison not "person[s]" subject to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983); *Preval v. Reno*, 57 F.Supp.2d 307, 310 (E.D.Va. 1999) ("[T]he Piedmont Regional Jail is not a 'person,' and therefore not amenable to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983."); and *Brooks v. Pembroke City Jail*, 722 F. Supp. 1294, 1301 (E.D.N.C. 1989) ("Claims under § 1983 are directed at 'persons' and the jail is not a person amenable to suit."). Cf. *Wright v. El Paso County Jail*, 642 F.2d 134, 136 n. 3 (5th Cir. 1981).

Sheriff's Departments in South Carolina are state agencies, not municipal departments. See Section 23-13-550, South Carolina Code of Laws; and 1975 S.C.Att'y.Gen'l.Op. No. 47 (January 22, 1975); and Section 23-13-10 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, which provides that only the Sheriff has the authority to hire or terminate employees of the Sheriff's Department, and that the Sheriff is responsible for neglect of duty or misconduct by a deputy sheriff. See also *Allen v. Fidelity and Deposit Company*, 515 F. Supp. 1185, 1189-1191 (D.S.C. 1981) (County cannot be held liable for actions of deputy

sheriff because deputy sheriffs serve at pleasure of the Sheriff, not the County), *affirmed*, 694 F.2d 716 (4th Cir. 1982) [Table]; and *Comer v. Brown*, 88 F.3d 1315, 1332 (4th Cir. 1996) (suit against Sheriff of Greenville County: ". . . Sheriff Brown is an arm of the State."). Indeed, any damages to the plaintiff, if awarded in this case, would be paid by the South Carolina State Insurance Reserve Fund. *Comer v. Brown, supra*, 88 F.3d at 1332 ("Judgments against the Greenville County Sheriff are paid by the South Carolina State Insurance Reserve Fund.").

Since the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department is a state agency, the Sheriff of Cherokee County (Bill Blanton) is immune from suit under the Eleventh Amendment. The Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution divests this court of jurisdiction to entertain a suit brought against the State of South Carolina or its integral parts, such as a state agency or department. The Eleventh Amendment provides:

The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State.

The Eleventh Amendment divests this federal district court of jurisdiction to entertain a suit brought against the State of South Carolina or its integral parts, such as a state agency or department. See, e.g., *Federal Maritime Commission v. South Carolina State Ports Authority*, 535 U.S. 743 (2002); *Board of Trustees of University of Alabama v. Garrett*, 531 U.S. 356 (2001); *Kimel v. Florida Board of Regents*, 528 U.S. 62 (2000) (Congress exceeded its authority in making Age Discrimination in Employment Act [ADEA] applicable to States); *Alden v. Maine*, 527 U.S. 706 (1999); *Pennhurst State School & Hospital v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89 (1984) (although express language of Eleventh Amendment only

forbids suits by citizens of other States against a State, Eleventh Amendment bars suits against a State filed by its own citizens); *Belcher v. South Carolina Board of Corrections*, 460 F. Supp. 805, 808-809 (D.S.C. 1978); and *Simmons v. South Carolina State Highway Dept.*, 195 F. Supp. 516, 517 (E.D.S.C. 1961).

With respect to the racial composition of the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department, the plaintiff does not have standing to sue. See *Laird v. Tatum*, 408 U.S. 1 (1972); *Valley Forge Christian College v. Americans United for Separation of Church & State*, 454 U.S. 464, 482 (1982); *Lake Carriers Ass'n v. MacMullan*, 406 U.S. 498, 506 (1972); *Flast v. Cohen*, 392 U.S. 83, 99 (1968)(a district court, when determining whether a plaintiff has standing to sue, must focus on the status of the party who has filed the complaint, and that the merits of the case are irrelevant); *Frank Krasner Enterprises, Ltd. v. Montgomery County, Maryland*, 401 F.3d 230, 234-236 & nn. 6-9 (4th Cir. 2005) (collecting cases on standing); *Inmates v. Sheriff Owens*, 561 F.2d 560, 562-563 (4th Cir. 1977) (one inmate does not have standing to sue on behalf of another inmate); and *Hummer v. Dalton*, 657 F.2d 621, 625-626 (4th Cir. 1981) (a prisoner cannot act as a "knight-errant" for others). Cf. *Oxendine v. Williams*, 509 F.2d 1405, 1407 & n. * (4th Cir. 1975) (a *pro se* prisoner cannot be an advocate for others in a class action).

Although the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department's Eleventh Amendment immunity has been abrogated for racial discrimination claims under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the plaintiff does not have standing to sue because he has never been an employee or potential employee of the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department. See 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e to 2000e-16; and *Davis v. North Carolina Dept. of Corrections*, 48 F.3d

134, 136-137 (4th Cir. 1995). Moreover, in light of the plaintiff's prior convictions for armed robbery, the plaintiff would not be a viable candidate to be a deputy sheriff. *Nixon v. Administrator of General Services*, 433 U.S. 425, 472 (1977) ("In short, appellant constituted a legitimate class of one[.]").

The plaintiff complains about the grievance procedure at the Cherokee County Detention Center. It is well settled that prisons and jails are not required to have a grievance procedure or adjustment committees. See *Adams v. Rice*, 40 F.3d 72, 74 (4th Cir.1994), *cert. denied*, 514 U.S. 1022 (1995). Moreover, in light of the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Jones v. Bock*, 75 U.S.L.W. 4058, 166 L.Ed.2d 798, 127 S.Ct. 910 (2007) (failure to exhaust prison remedies is an affirmative defense to be raised by the defendants after service of process), the plaintiff will not be prejudiced in his litigation in this federal district court because of the failure of personnel at the Cherokee County Detention Center to answer his grievances. See *Anderson v. XYZ Correctional Health Services*, 407 F.3d 674 (4th Cir. 2005); and *Lane v. Doan*, 287 F.Supp.2d 210, 212-213 (W.D.N.Y. 2003)(prisoner deemed to have exhausted administrative remedies where record was clear that he made reasonable efforts to exhaust but was impeded by prison officials).

Although the holding in *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477 (1994), is not applicable to the above-captioned case, see *Wallace v. Kato*, 166 L.Ed.2d 973, 127 S.Ct. 1091 (2007), the above-captioned case is still subject to summary dismissal insofar as the plaintiff's pending criminal case is concerned. Absent extraordinary circumstances, federal courts are not authorized to interfere with a State's pending criminal proceedings. See, e.g., *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 44 (1971); *Harkrader v. Wadley*, 172 U.S. 148,

169-170 (1898); *Taylor v. Taintor*, 83 U.S. (16 Wall.) 366, 370 & n. 8 (1873);⁶ *Nivens v. Gilchrist*, 319 F.3d 151 (4th Cir. 2003); and *Cinema Blue of Charlotte, Inc. v. Gilchrist*, 887 F.2d 49, 50-53 (4th Cir. 1989), cert. denied, 494 U.S. 1030 (1990). In *Cinema Blue of Charlotte, Inc. v. Gilchrist*, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled that federal district courts should abstain from constitutional challenges to state judicial proceedings, no matter how meritorious, if the federal claims have been or could be presented in an ongoing state judicial proceeding. *Cinema Blue of Charlotte, Inc. v. Gilchrist*, *supra*, 887 F.2d at 52. Moreover, the Anti-Injunction Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2283, expressly prohibits this court from enjoining such proceedings. See also *Bonner v. Circuit Court of St. Louis*, 526 F.2d 1331, 1336 (8th Cir. 1975)(*en banc*), cert. denied, 424 U.S. 946 (1976).

In *Bonner v. Circuit Court of St. Louis*, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit pointed out that federal constitutional claims are cognizable in both state courts and in federal courts: "Congress and the federal courts have consistently recognized that federal courts should permit state courts to try state cases, and that, where constitutional issues arise, state court judges are fully competent to handle them subject to Supreme Court review." The *pro se* plaintiff also does not meet the tests for a preliminary injunction or temporary restraining order enunciated in such cases as *North*

⁶Although the Supreme Court of the United States has not overruled *Taylor v. Taintor*, an unrelated portion of the decision in *Taylor v. Taintor*, which concerned the right of sureties to apprehend principals, has been superannuated by statute in Texas. See *Green v. State*, 829 S.W.2d 222, 223 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992)(“However, *Taylor* is not the law in Texas.”), affirming *Green v. State*, 785 S.W.2d 955 (Tex. App. Fort Worth 1990).

Carolina State Ports Authority v. Dart Containerline Company, 592 F.2d 749, 750-753 & n. 3 (4th Cir. 1979).

In any event, it is clear that the plaintiff has not exhausted his state court remedies. If the plaintiff is later convicted and sentenced in his pending criminal case, he has the remedy of filing a direct appeal. *State v. Northcutt*, 372 S.C. 207, 641 S.E.2d 873 (2007). If his direct appeal is unsuccessful, the plaintiff can file an application for post-conviction relief. See § 17-27-10, *et seq.*, South Carolina Code of Laws.

If a South Carolina prisoner's application for post-conviction relief is denied or dismissed by a Court of Common Pleas, he or she can file an "appeal" (petition for writ of certiorari) in that post-conviction case. See § 17-27-100, South Carolina Code of Laws; and *Knight v. State*, 284 S.C. 138, 325 S.E.2d 535 (1985).⁷ South Carolina prisoners have been successful on such appeals in their post-conviction cases. See, e.g., *Staggs v. State*, 372 S.C. 549, 643 S.E.2d 690 (2007)(post-conviction relief granted on grounds of trial counsel's actual conflict of interest from representing members of same family; new trial ordered); *Custodio v. State*, 373 S.C. 4, 644 S.E.2d 36 (2007)(post-conviction relief granted on issue of enforcement of plea agreement); *Morris v. State*, 371 S.C. 278, 639 S.E.2d 53 (2006)(on issue of ineffective assistance of counsel); *Riddle v. Ozmint*, 369 S.C. 39, 631

⁷The Supreme Court of South Carolina has authorized the South Carolina Court of Appeals to hear petitions for certiorari in post-conviction cases upon referral from the Supreme Court of South Carolina. See Supreme Court Order 2005-08 (C.O. 08 effective May 1, 2005), Shearhouse Advance Sheet # 19; and *Dunlap v. State*, 371 S.C. 585, 641 S.E.2d 431 (2007)(“In appeals from criminal convictions **or post-conviction relief matters**, a litigant is not required to petition for rehearing and certiorari following an adverse decision of the Court of Appeals in order to be deemed to have exhausted all available state remedies respecting a claim of error.”)(emphasis in original).

S.E.2d 70 (2006); *Stevens v. State*, 365 S.C. 309, 617 S.E.2d 366 (2005); and *Vaughn v. State*, 362 S.C. 163, 607 S.E.2d 72, 73-76 (2004).

It is well settled that a direct appeal is a viable state court remedy. *Castille v. Peoples*, 489 U.S. 346, 349-352 (1989). The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has held that South Carolina's Uniform Post-Conviction Procedure Act is also a viable state-court remedy. See *Miller v. Harvey*, 566 F.2d 879, 880-881 (4th Cir. 1977), *cert. denied*, 439 U.S. 838 (1978); and *Patterson v. Leeke*, 556 F.2d 1168, 1170-1173 (4th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 434 U.S. 929 (1977). In an application for post-conviction relief, an applicant can also raise issues relating to ineffective assistance of counsel. See *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 686 (1984); *Brightman v. State*, 336 S.C. 348, 520 S.E.2d 614 (1999); and *Drayton v. Evatt*, 312 S.C. 4, 430 S.E.2d 517, 519-520 (1993)(issues that could have been raised at trial or on direct appeal cannot be raised in a PCR application absent a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel).

Recommendation

Accordingly, it is recommended that the District Court dismiss the above-captioned case *without prejudice* and without issuance and service of process. See *Denton v. Hernandez, supra; Neitzke v. Williams, supra; Haines v. Kerner, supra; Brown v. Briscoe*, 998 F.2d 201, 202-204 & n. * (4th Cir. 1993), replacing unpublished opinion originally tabled at 993 F.2d 1535 (4th Cir. 1993); *Boyce v. Alizaduh, supra; Todd v. Baskerville, supra*, 712 F.2d at 74; 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)[essentially a redesignation of "old" 1915(d)]; and 28 U.S.C. § 1915A[as soon as possible after docketing, district courts should review prisoner

cases to determine whether they are subject to summary dismissal]. The plaintiff's attention is directed to the Notice on the next page.

October 12, 2007
Greenville, South Carolina

s/William M. Catoe
United States Magistrate Judge

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The plaintiff is advised that he may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Court Judge. **Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections.** In the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court judge need not conduct a *de novo* review, but instead must "only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation." *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005).

Specific written objections must be filed within ten (10) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). The time calculation of this ten-day period excludes weekends and holidays and provides for an additional three (3) days for filing by mail. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a) & (e). Filing by mail pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

**Larry W. Propes, Clerk
United States District Court
Post Office Box 10768
Greenville, South Carolina 29603**

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in the waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir.), cert. denied, *Schronce v. United States*, 467 U.S. 1208 (1984); and *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985).